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Ex-Mayors



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There was a wonderful discussion with four former Mayors of Toronto in the Globe and Mail on September 17th, 2010. There's an MP3 download too. While proving it, they basically all say the current crop of candidates haven't been saying anything worth saying about our most pressing issues for months. That's why the rest of us were bored too. We basically agree it's been a joke.

There's no excuse for this when they'll be in charge for 4 years. It's well-explained below with excerpts and my real-time citations reading it for the first time in bold. If people want to know why I'm running for Mayor, they can hear great reasons from former Mayors to challenge the front-runners. We should all know they aren't really saying anything, but I am so we get something.

This is one of those great examples of seeing "truth" in the mass media, which happens often. In fact, even the indie media bases many of its stories and analysis on rare mainstream news that's reported but not repeated, like this important conversation below. Instead of just ignoring or going along with a boring election, we should spice it up by asking for more than we're getting now.

Please pass this page on so people can see the original and my analysis. While a poll of just 1,021 adults set up the "Ford vs. Smitherman" finals, instead of just going along with cheering for either, let's get an idea of what they've been up to and who they are. Otherwise we'll cheer for politicians instead of helping us understand them better, then complain about them later.

I think we want to believe we can get more, so let's thank our former mayors for their help.

Warm regards,

Vijay



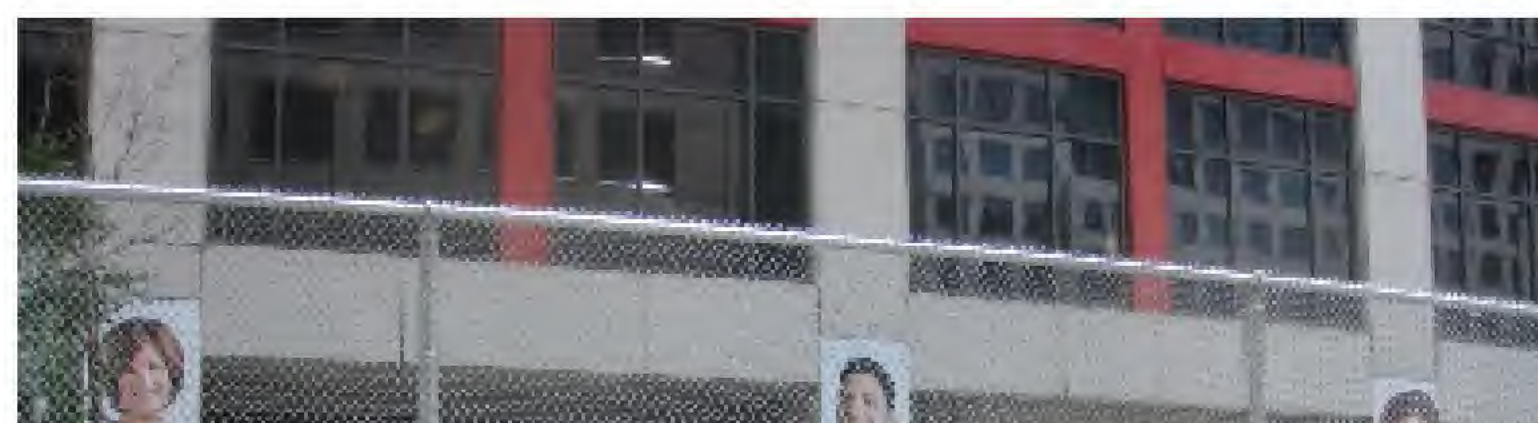
The campaign's biggest loser so far? Toronto itself

Globe & Mail | Roundtable Discussion | September 17, 2010

With former Mayors of Toronto John Sewell, Art Eggleton, Barbara Hall and David Crombie

Download MP3 or Read Transcript

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/toronto/city-votes/the-campaigns-biggest-loser-so-far-toronto-itself/article1712036>





"It is difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends upon his not understanding it."

- Upton Sinclair



Globe and Mail Transcript Excerpts and Comments in Bold in Real-Time, September 18, 2010

David Crombie: But the part that seems to bite is the part that simply assumes that we don't have anything going now, and you have to reinvent Toronto right away. And preferably before the election. And so I think people are kind of submerged, almost, or overcome with policy.

I think this means they're not talking about anything we care about and focused on fantasy.

Barbara Hall: And I think it's very difficult, and we're seeing that in the campaign, to have messages that relate to all those folks and those different municipal local cultures.

Is it because they're not talking about health, economic and other issues we all care about?

Art Eggleton: And whoever happens to be the leading candidate in another couple of weeks is probably going to benefit from some of that. Because I think there are a lot of people in this city that just don't want to have Rob Ford as the mayor.

Is Rob Ford meant to be the fall-guy for the long-predicted veteran George Smitherman to win?

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John Sewell: To me, the biggest surprise in the election is that so many candidates have not been able to define what they stand for. And they just can't say to people in one sentence, 'Here's what I'm about.'

That's what everyone says, so should we trust them now after months wasted saying nothing?

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David Crombie: I think people were looking for a big change, they felt the disconnect that Barbara was talking about. And one of the easiest things to always talk about is, "I'm going to cut taxes." And they don't so much talk about what programs they're intending to cut.

They don't name the corruption they're going to fight either and most lying politicians do this.

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John Sewell: The message I think he's delivered that people are responding to is, "City Hall isn't on your side and they're a bunch of fat cats."... Then Ford says, 'Oh, by the way, the way to solve that is to cut taxes.' Now I think he's wrong on that one, but I think the first point is the one that resonates: That City Hall is not on your side. And unfortunately I think that's one of the legacies that David Miller has left -- that notion that that's the case.

What happened? Anyway, if I win, this is why I want people to stay in touch after the election.

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Art Eggleton: Well I think that's true, and I think he's [Ford] given a very simple, simplistic kind of message: Respect for the taxpayer's dollar. He is building on anger that a lot of people have on what appear to be issues of gross spending and entitlement and the strike and things like that, that have resulted in people not wanting the status quo.

If people are angry about how their money is spent, why don't candidates say what they'll cut?

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Barbara Hall: Clearly there's a sense of anger at the sense of entitlement, I think, that people have seen played out -- not just at local government, but across government -- at a time when many people are struggling in a way they haven't ever within their lifetimes.

After months of campaigning, have any of the Mayor candidate seriously addressed this issue?

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Art Eggleton: Yeah. Sometimes it's the little things that annoy people the most. I remember when we were on city council, it was always the little things that got most of the attention. Around budget time the big, multi-billion-dollar, million-dollar expenditures went through relatively quickly compared to those little things. And there's been a lot of those little things in the media. And I think a lot of people who may not have paid a lot of attention to a lot of things going on at City Hall notice those things, in particular. And that helps create anger.

Is it possible that the big things are affecting us a lot more too? Either way, we need answers.

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David Crombie: Do you think we're going to get now, then, in this last phase of the election campaign, are we going to get past the anger part? Or is it going to continue to fuel it? Because my concern is that anger is a very bad emotion to build a city on, and it shouldn't be lasting four years. And it won't last four years. So if John's right, and I think he's at least partly right, we're going to pay a pretty heavy price to simply allow that anger to direct the course of events.

Will the angry people of Toronto get angry enough to make sure they're not angrier in 4 years?

John Sewell: And I agree, very much. I mean, when people talk about how Toronto works really well, it does -- except for City Hall. Everything else works. But to me, the question for the next five or six weeks is going to be what candidates are actually going to say, "Okay, Ford. You're right on that. I'm going to try to tap into it, but in fact I've got some good solutions about how to deal with it."

And so the question is going to be -- and Ford clearly isn't able to do that, he would have done it if he could have -- are any other candidates going to be able to do that? To say, "Wait a second: That's the problem, here's the answer."

This is why the truth is so important, otherwise it's really hard to come up with good solutions.

David Crombie: ...we're getting some of the weirdest proposals that are totally unfounded, but trying to tap into some other kind of populist instinct. So my concern, and that's the reason I raise the question is we're not getting even some modest, thoughtful, incremental improvements over unsatisfactory conditions. We've forgotten about that part. It's all got to be giant Hail Mary passes on a regular basis. So they're trying to out-shout, it seems to me, rather than actually dealing with people looking for some way that they can understand, can they trust what this person is saying, and trust that person?

He's goofing on the "big project" fantasy approach instead of dealing with our real issues too.

Art Eggleton: Pierre Trudeau used to say, "Don't compare me to the Almighty, compare me to the alternative." And I think people are going to start to do more of that. So while there's been a lot of discussion around different issues like transportation and housing and the fiscal situation, I think there's going to be more and more attention now paid to leadership. People should be looking at their visions, their policies, their ability to articulate them. But also their ability to work with the council. Remember, the mayor -- and we've all been there -- we know the mayor's only one vote out of 45. He or she's got to be able to garner enough support to get something through.

That's why I want to formally make sure the people of Toronto are involved to get what we want.

John Sewell: So it's hard to figure out how to be a leader, I think, in this weird thing called the megacity. I think one of the ways of doing it is saying, "Maybe the megacity isn't working all that well, and maybe we've got to do some restructuring?" I'd be interested in hearing some campaign talk about that, 'cause I think that might also be a response to that leadership issue.

I agree, de-centralized power and honest money are the keys to getting our city back on track.

Art Eggleton: Their messaging is all over the map. I challenged them, in fact, to put out a fiscal plan, all of them, when I chaired a debate the other evening, to see how their numbers add up. 'Cause I doubt they do.

John Sewell: They weren't quite aware -- "What do you mean, a fiscal plan? We have to worry about this question?"

David Crombie: Participaction, yeah!

Art Eggleton: They cut \$200-million in tax revenue, then say they're going to make it up by cutting spending by about \$10-million. That doesn't add up.

As we can see, former Mayors of Toronto notice that all of their budget talk is nonsense too.

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John Sewell: I think we have to realize, just to build on what Art's saying, how powerful the mayor is. The mayor appoints the CEO of the city, who in turn appoints all of the senior staff. The mayor appoints the chairs of the committees, and the mayor appoints the executive committee. And, more important, the mayor is the person who can make speeches and set tones.

Using Mayor Miller's "strong mayor" powers will help me deal with issues of serious corruption.

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Art Eggleton: Something else we haven't been hearing in the campaign is the question of social inclusion in this city. The future prosperity of this city may well depend on how we address the current level of our poverty.

Isn't it amazing how no main Mayor candidates have discussed poverty? What does that say?

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David Crombie: The media always quite naturally focus on the mayoralty race because it's easier and simpler and you can deal with personalities easier. But one of the exciting things is you're going to have about a third, I think, of the council is going to be new.

That means they aren't "connected" in ways that stop them from handling our biggest issues.

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Art Eggleton: Something else we haven't been hearing in the campaign is the question of social inclusion in this city. From the days when the four of us were at City Hall, things have changed dramatically. We've always said we're proud of the neighbourhoods in this city, and we are. It is a city of neighbourhoods. But there are some neighbourhoods that are now doing as well of as others. There's a lot of poverty in a group of neighbourhoods in this city and a lot of people who've come as immigrants or refugees are having a struggle of making ends meet. There's over 70,000 people on Toronto Community Housing's waiting list...

John Sewell: Families!

David Crombie: Households!

Art Eggleton: Households! they call it households. And it means that many of these people will wait for years and years. And just the other day I saw the chief medical officer of health says that one in three children in this city is in poor households. There are issues in terms of kids going to school without enough nutrition, not being able to learn well, dropping out of school. There are a lot of issues in this city, not to mention there's still the scar of homelessness in this city. These issues are not getting enough attention, and they need to, because the future prosperity of this city may well depend on how we address the current level of our poverty.

Since the "character" of the new Mayor is important, who are the people running ignoring this?

Sewell: The solution to all this is clear: What we need is a board of control consisting of former mayors. Wouldn't that be spectacular?

I agree, many retired professionals are a lot more candid and compassionate than when active.

John Sewell: But the thing they should realize is there are a whole lot of people out there whose advice they should be seeking. And not former politicians particularly, but there's a lot of people in community organizations, in the business community.

I would add ordinary individuals and groups of friends who aren't part of any group-think structure.

John Sewell: And you know I think one of the problems with the current administration is it hasn't reached out enough and actually engaged people in a meaningful way. A new mayor's got to do that and that's going to be a really powerful thing if that happens.

David Crombie: There isn't a person in this city who wouldn't respond to a call from the mayor saying, "Would you like to come down to City Hall and give us a hand?" On whatever the topic is. And John's absolutely right: There are many, many people in this city who would like to contribute. They're not even looking for money.

This is exactly why I'm running for Mayor, but I'm the ONLY candidate who's saying I'll do this.

Mehler Paperny: Are you worried about Toronto? Are you worried about the next four years?

Oddly enough, the first time the interviewer stepped in is when people were offered power.

Art Eggleton: I think people want someone who is sensible, pragmatic but at the same kind can inspire. People want someone who's mayor that they can be proud of. But I agree with John: Toronto will survive no matter who the mayor is. The city is much more powerful than any one person.

I agree and this is another great reason to vote for me: I can't screw it up, but I can clean it up.

John Sewell: I must say, I am really waiting for the end of this campaign. I have had so many discussions, naked, in the gym with people who want to know what to do. I'm trying to have a shower and they're saying, "Wait a second, now: What do we do?"

David Crombie: And people really are -- they don't know what to do. I'm not naked in the gym, but walking the streets wherever I go, people slide up to you as if they're going to -- and they say, "Who should I vote for? who should I vote for?" people are really perplexed.

Barbara Hall: And even though they're perplexed, the good news about that is that they're thinking about it. They're concerned about it, they want to know. But I agree.

After this long, are we actually just talking about "who" to accept, not "what" they stand for?

David Sewell: And maybe people should be talking to their neighbour, saying, "Hey, why don't we talk about this?"

I agree, hopefully we talk about real issues with our neighbours to get real results this election.

Original Globe and Mail Link, September 17th, 2010:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/toronto/city-votes/the-campaigns-biggest-loser-so-far-toronto-itself/article1712036/>



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